

**Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa** (Urdu: میرزا محمد ہادی رسوا) (b. 1857 - d. October 21, 1931) was a renowned Urdu poet and writer of fiction, plays, tracts, and treatises on religion, philosophy and astronomy. He is famous for writing the Urdu novel, *Umrao Jan Ada*, based on the life of a renowned Lucknow courtesan and poetess. He was a versatile genius and one of the pioneers of the Urdu novel. He was well-versed in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, English, Latin, and Greek.

[edit] Life

Accurate details of the life of Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa are not available and there are material contradictions between the accounts given by his contemporaries. Ruswa himself mentions that his ancestors arrived in India from Persia and that his great-grandfather became an adjutant in the army of the Nawab of Awadh. The street on which the family home was situated is to this day known as *Ajitun Ki Gali* (Adjutant's Lane). He had not much to say of his grandfather and father, except for that they were both keenly interested in arithmetic and astronomy. Mirza Muhammad Hadi Ruswa was born in 1857 in the city of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh where he also received his early education. His parents passed away when he was sixteen years old and he became a ward of his maternal uncle, who relieved him of much of his inheritance. A man who befriended Ruswa was Haider Baksh, a renowned calligraphist of his time. He not only taught Ruswa the art of penmanship but also gave him money when he was in need. Haider Baksh made a considerable fortune by counterfeiting revenue stamps. He was soon arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Amongst many people who aided Ruswa in his writing career was the Urdu poet, *Dabeer*. Ruswa studied at home and passed his matriculation and Munshi Fazil examinations. Thereafter, he received an Overseers diploma from Thomas Engineering School, Roorkee. For some time, he was employed in the railways, laying tracks in Balochistan. All through these years, he continued to write and study; his passions were chemistry, alchemy and astronomy. After a short term of Government service, he returned to Lucknow to teach and write. He found a job as a teacher in the Local Mission School and then as a lecturer at the Christian College where he taught mathematics, science, philosophy and Persian. He left Lucknow for Hyderabad and worked in the Bureau of Translation of the Osmania University for a year. He returned to Osmania University again, in his seventies and he died of typhoid fever on October 21, 1931 at the age of 75.

[edit] Writing career

Ruswa's first work was published in 1887 when he was thirty years old. This was a long poem recounting the romantic tale of Laila and Majnu. Sadly, it was not well received. His versification was amateurish, his wit unwitty, his satire stale and flat. Portions of the work were condemned by critics as commonplace and vulgar. The criticism did not, however, dampen Ruswa's ardour to write poetry: he continued to compose mediocre verse till the end of his days.

The first part of his *Afshai Raz* was published when Ruswa was forty-five. No sequel is traceable. Three years later came *Umrao Jan Ada*. It was an immediate and thunderous success. Critics acclaimed it at once as the best narrative of the life and culture of Lucknow and praised Ruswa's mastery of Urdu prose. Several editions of the novel were sold out. The theme, no doubt, contributed to its large sale, but it was its language that made it a steady seller for all time. Two other novels, *Zat-i-Shareef* and *Shareef Zada* did not do as well, but *Akhtari Begum* was again applauded by the Urdu-speaking intelligentsia. It is still considered by some to be better than *Umrao Jan Ada*.

Ruswa wrote a large number of tracts on religion and philosophical subjects. He had a deep and abiding interest in religion and Greek metaphysics. He was the head of the Literary Department at the All India Shia Conference and wrote twenty volumes on the Shia religion.

Despite the name that Ruswa made for himself in literary circles, these novels and works of philosophy and religion did not give him much money. His sustenance came from the worst kind of penny dreadfuls which had titles like *The Loves of Satan*, *The Bleeding Lover*, *The Murderous Dame* etc. Ruswa was an excellent example of a dual literary personality - an earnest-minded Dr. Jekyll burning the midnight oil writing sublime prose, working out a system of Urdu shorthand or studying the movements of the stars - and the vulgarian Mr. Hyde, doing the rounds of the city's brothels and churning out cheap trash to bring in much needed filthy lucre.

Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Umrav Jan Ada. Lucknow : Bhargav School Book Depot, 1948. 256 p. ; 16 cm.

Novel depicting the Lucknow society in the 19th century.

Literature - Fiction.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 52698

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Miftahul mantiq. Hyderabad (Dn.) : Darul taba Jamia Uthmania, 1923. 2 v. ; 24 cm.

Logic.

Philosophy and religion.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 49856

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Khuni joru. Lucknow : Muftabai Press, 1928. 64 p. ; 22 cm.

Literature - Fiction.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 52695

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Falsafa-i-shair. Lucknow : Sham-i-Avadh Press, 1901. [46] p. ; 21 cm.

Philosophy of poetry.

Literature - General works, histories of literature, literary criticism, general anthologies, etc.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 50718

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Tarikh-i-falsafa-i-Islam. Hyderabad (Dn.) : Jamia Uthmania, 1929. 176 p. ; 24 cm.

History of the Islamic philosophy.

Philosophy and religion.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 49857

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Khuni shahzadah. Lucknow : Mahadev Prasad, 1921. 234 p. ; 22 cm.

Literature - Fiction.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 52696

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Khuni bhed. Lucknow : Hindustani Press, 1924. 200 p. ; 22 cm.

Literature - Fiction.

In: Urdu

NBIL no. 52694

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Muhammad Hadi Rusva, Mirza, 1859-1931.

Sharif zadah. Allahabad : Ram Narain Lal, 1936. 188 p. ; 16 cm.

Literature - Fiction.

Mihrimāh, the daughter of Kānūnī Süleymān and Khurrem Sultān [q.v.]. In 948/1541 he was promoted to second vizier, and in 951/1544 succeeded Khādīm Süleymān Pasha [q.v.] as Grand Vizier. Dismissed in 960/1553 during the outcry caused by the execution of Süleymān's eldest son Muṣṭafā, Rüstem Pasha spent two years in retirement before being re-appointed Grand Vizier in 962/1555, following the execution (at which he is said to have connived) of Kara Ahmed Pasha [q.v.], grand vizier since 960/1553. He then served in this post until his death, probably from dropsy, in 968/1561. He was buried in the *türbe* designed for him by the architect Sinān [q.v.] next to the Shehzāde mosque in Istanbul. (For further biographical details, see S. Altundağ and Ş. Turan, *IA*, art. *Rüstem Paşa*; F. Babinger, *ET*, art. *Rüstem Paşa*; *Sid̄ill-i 'Othmānī*, ii, 377-8, iii, 106).

Rüstem Pasha was Süleymān's longest-serving Grand Vizier (a total of fourteen-and-a-half years in two periods of office), but one whose reputation, both contemporary and historical, was mixed. During his first period of office a major treaty was concluded with the Hapsburg Emperor (in 1547) stipulating the annual payment of 30,000 ducats' "tribute" by the latter. Internally, his tenure was marked throughout by his successful efforts to build up government finances, neglecting no possible sources of income, even, according to the Habsburg ambassador Busbecq, selling vegetables and flowers grown in the grounds of Topkapı Sarāyī [q.v.] (Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish letters*, tr. E.S. Forster, Oxford 1968, 30). On the other hand, Rüstem Pasha was held largely responsible for introducing the sale of government offices and for allowing imperial *khāṣṣ* [q.v.] to be given out in tax farms, thus paving the way for the bribery and corruption detected by later Ottoman historians. He amassed an immense personal fortune (see the inventory of possessions on his death given by Pečewī, *Ta'rikh*, i, 23, taken from 'Alī's [q.v.] *Künhü 'l-akhbār*), and was accused of greed and avarice both on his own behalf and that of the state (for several complaints against him, see M.T. Gökbilgin, *Rüstem Paşa ve hakkindaki ithamlar*, in *Tarih dergisi*, viii/11 [1955], 11-50).

Rüstem Pasha appears to have enjoyed the sultan's full confidence, due partly to his abilities and partly to the mutual agreement between himself, Mihrimāh Sultān and Khurrem Sultān. However, his positive achievements as Grand Vizier were overshadowed by his involvement in the conspiracy leading to the execution of the popular prince Muṣṭafā, which cleared the way for the eventual succession of one of Khurrem Sultān's two surviving sons, Selim II [q.v.] (Gökbilgin, *op. cit.*, 20-4, 38-43). Rüstem's dismissal in 960/1553 may have been at his request, in order to forestall demands from supporters of Muṣṭafā for his own execution.

Busbecq's description of Rüstem Pasha as "a man of keen and far-seeing mind" is largely borne out by Ottoman sources, who attest his capable administration and loyal service, stressing his financial acumen and the fact that even where offices were sold these were only to worthy people who were never thereafter dismissed. Whereas to Busbecq he seemed "always gloomy and brutal" and 'Alī criticized his dislike of dervishes and poets, Pečewī stresses his correct manners, sobriety and piety (Busbecq, *Turkish letters*, 29, 190; J. Schmidt, *Pure water for thirsty Muslims: a study of Muṣṭafā 'Alī of Gallipoli's Künhü l-akhbār*, Leiden 1991, 153, 89, 159; Pečewī, *Ta'rikh*, i, 21-2). He was nevertheless a master of political intrigue and a controversial figure.

As a patron of architecture, Rüstem Pasha commis-

sioned, in addition to his principal foundation in Istanbul, the Rüstem Pasha mosque, at least four *medreses* and a number of other mosques, 'imārets, *kerwānsarāys*, and other structures throughout Anatolia and Rumeli. Many of these were also designed by Sinān. However, it is now thought that the historical work *Tewārikh-i Āl-i 'Othmān* (or *Ta'rikh-i Rüstem Pasha*) for long attributed to Rüstem Pasha's authorship, is in fact part of the *Djāmi' ul-tewārikh* of Maṭrākčī Naṣūh [q.v.], compiled at Rüstem Pasha's request (L. Forrer, *Die Osmanische Chronik des Rüstem Pascha*, Leipzig 1923; H.G. Yurdaydın, *An Ottoman historian of the XVIIth century: Naṣūh al-Maṭrākī and his Beyān-ı menāzil-i sefer-i 'Irākayn and its importance for some 'Irāqī cities*, in *Turcica*, vii (1975), 180-2).

*Bibliography*: For further references in addition to those in the text, see the bibl. to S. Altundağ and Ş. Turan, *IA*, art. *Rüstem Paşa*.

(CHRISTINE WOODHEAD)

RUSWĀ, MIRZĀ MUḤAMMAD HĀDĪ, Urdu novelist, poet, translator and writer on scientific, philosophical and religious subjects. He was born in Lucknow most probably in 1858. His ancestors had migrated from Persia during the Mughal period. His great-grandfather, Mirzā Dhu 'l-Faḳār 'Alī Beg, took up permanent residence in Awadh [q.v.] during Āṣaf al-Dawla's time (1775-97), and became adjutant in the Nawāb's army. Ruswā received his early education from his father, Aghā Muḥammad Taḳī, who taught him Arabic, Persian and mathematics. For learning English, Ruswā went to La Martinière College, where he remained until the middle grade. By the time he was sixteen years of age both his parents died. Ruswā came into a large inheritance, but his maternal uncle, who was his guardian, appropriated most of it. What remained was squandered by Ruswā himself in self-indulgence and extravagant living. At this time, a friend of his father, by the name of Ḥaydar Bakhsh, who was a calligrapher by profession, came to Ruswā's aid, and helped him through his financial difficulties. Ruswā enrolled himself in Thomason Engineering School, Roorkee, and obtained an overseer's diploma in 1876. Thereafter, he worked first in Rae Bareilly and, later, in the Quetta region of Balūčistān, where his duties were connected with the laying of railway tracks. Not long afterwards he resigned from his job, and took up employment as instructor of Persian in the Church Mission School, Lucknow. From there he passed his high school examination as a private candidate.

In 1888 Ruswā joined Christian College, Lucknow, to teach Arabic and Persian, and stayed there for over thirty years. In 1894 he passed his B.A. examination from Punjab University as a private student. Together with his full-time job in Christian College, he taught briefly in Isabella Thorburn College, an institution for women students. Towards the latter part of his life, he showed an open involvement with religion, which found expression in a number of religious tracts composed by him and in the publication of a journal entitled *al-Hakam*, which contained articles on religious matters written from a Shī'ī point of view. This journal continued to be published from 1902 to 1907. In 1919 Ruswā found employment in the Bureau of Translation, Osmania University, Ḥaydarābād (Deccan), where he spent the remaining years of his life. He died in Ḥaydarābād on 21 October 1931 and was buried there.

Ruswā was a man of varied talents. His intellectual preoccupations were not restricted only to literary pursuits, but extended to other fields as well, such as philosophy and science. For giving expression to his

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